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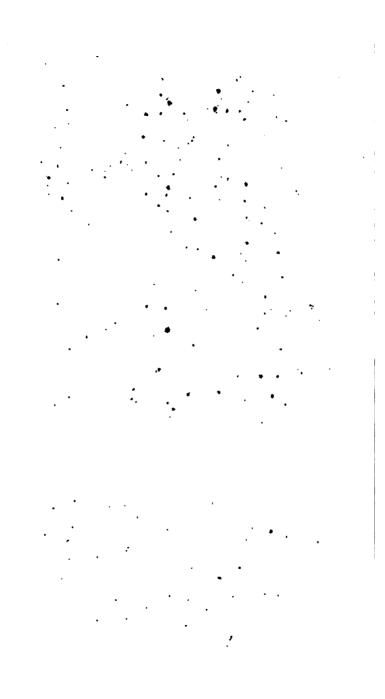


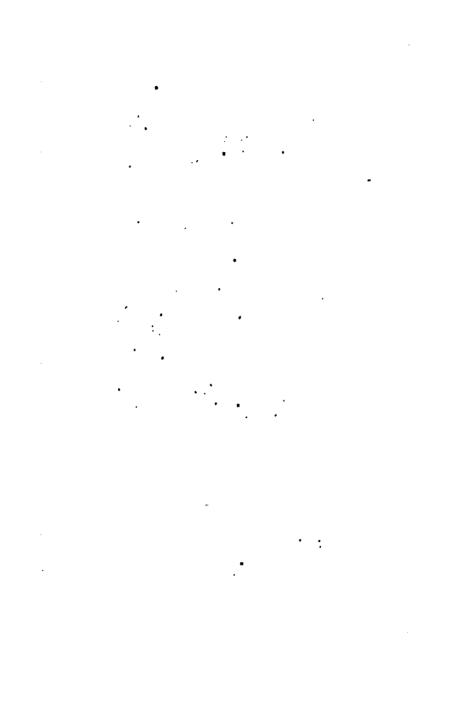


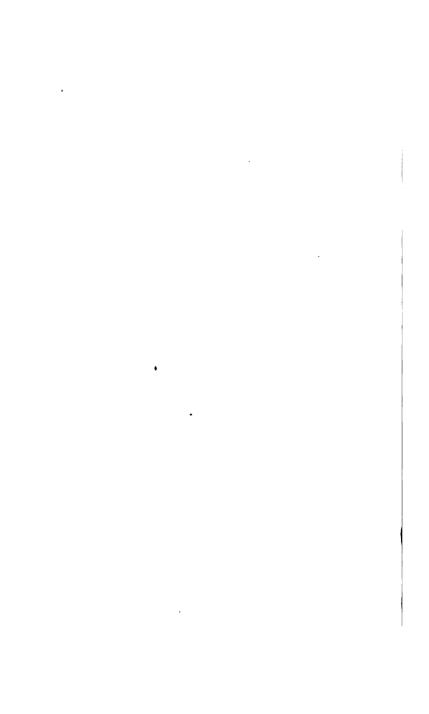
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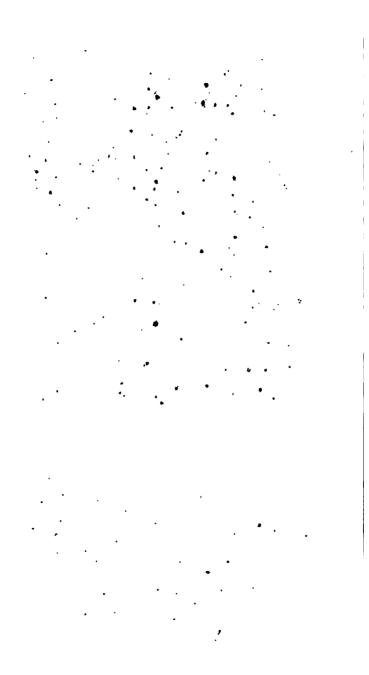
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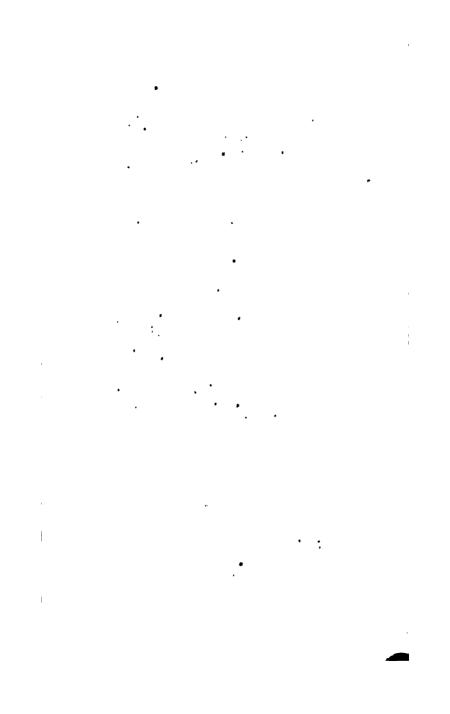
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# LETTER

TO

### THE AUTHOR

OF

## WAVERLEY, IVANHOE,

&c. &c. &c.

ON THE

### MORAL TENDENCY

OF THOSE

### Popular Works.

"No writing is good that does not tend to better mankind in some way or other." Pope, Spence's Anecdotes.

#### LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, OPPOSITE ALBANY, PICCADILLY.

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S. Gonnell, Printer, Little Queen Street, London.

# LETTER,

&c.

SIR,

PROBABLY, from the niche you fill in the Temple of Fame, you may regard with contempt any observations on works already so stamped, as yours are, by public approbation; and consider the remarks I propose to offer, as a mist that floats around the base of the elevation on which you are placed, without ever reaching its summit. Or, reposing in the bosom of a retreat embellished by the fruits of your literary labours, you

may care little for the MORAL feelings of your readers, provided your bookseller is satisfied with their number. I really thought you so careless of that sort of fame which hands an author down to posterity as a benefactor to his country, as you appear to be, I should not have taken up my pen. I am fully aware of the tender ground I am venturing on; but, as an anonymous author, you are open to what would be impertinence to an avowed one: if you avail yourself of the shelter, you must abide by its dangers. The twenty-seven volumes of romances which you have in the course of a very few years given to the world, have made you, in some sort, a public character; and whilst they afford abundant proof of the fertility of your genius, and the almost inexhaustible resource of your imagination, they bring

corresponding duties: and a consideration which appears to have escaped your notice, strikes very forcibly on my mind, and I am inclined to believe on many of your readers also, namely, the MORAL RESPONSIBILITY of authors, especially those whose works are meant for popular, and very extensive reading. I trust, therefore, to the liberality common to genius, for your receiving with good-will a few remarks, made, I assure you, in the true spirit of candour and courtesy, by a warm admirer of your brilliant and extraordinary talents.

The common obligation that every caterer for the public is under to provide wholesome and nutritious food, either for body or mind, is obvious and acknowledged. You, Sir, would fine your baker, or punish your brewer, if you could detect them mixing any deleterious

ingredients in your bread or your beverage: but theirs would be a trifling, and local offence, compared with an injury to the public MIND, or MORALS; and amenable at a very different tribunal. And there is a wide difference between just avoiding to do an injury, and fulfilling a positive duty. There are sins of omission, as well as commission; and every opportunity of benefiting others we neglect to improve, must come under our sins of omission.

I have heard it asserted that your works have not less than THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND readers. Is it no dereliction of duty to neglect an opportunity of improving even one hundredth part of these readers? especially if it is considered who a great part of them are.

An expensive quarto that can only be our chased by the rich, and read by the

studious, which having had its day on the drawing-room table, is consigned to its destined shelf in the library; however valuable the contents may be, or numerous the years its author may have spent on collecting and arranging materials to enrich its pages; possesses not half the NATIONAL importance that belongs to one of your popular romances. The good or evil of a large high-priced work spreads through a very small circle; what of either is contained in your volumes, circulates in every part of the kingdom, and amongst all its different classes of population. Your works are at the same time the amusement and conversation of the drawing-room, the housekeeper's room, and the servants' hall; the butler and the footman exercise their jockeyship, the moment the family drive from the door on their airing, to purloin the

volume left on the sofa, and indulge themselves in its perusal till the carriage returns; and the same contest takes place between the lady's-maid and the housemaid, for that which is accidentally left on the toilette.

Your works also find their way into the work-rooms of milliners and dressmakers; and when

"The needle plies its busy task,
- - - - - their page, by one
Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest,"

induces them to pursue their employment with more alacrity; and they are tempted sometimes to work over-hours, to hear the fate of a WAVERLEY or an IVANHOR.

Another, and by no means a small or unimportant class of readers, are school-boys. And the careful parent who should desire a little boy of ten years old, first going to a public school, not to read the HEART OF MID-LOTHIAN, would inevitably make the poor child, by such a restriction, an object of derision amongst his school-fellows, and perhaps procure for him a nick-name that would be remembered through life: yet what parent's heart would not ache at having such a book put into the hands of an innocent child, at an age when he is incapable of discrimination, and takes every thing literally? You may reply, Sir, that you neither wrote the volumes in question for school-boys, servants, or dress-makers — but you have written them for the PUBLIC; and if they had not been read by these classes, they could not have produced half their profit. Those purchased for private libraries, make a smaller part of an edition, and

have fewer readers than those taken by circulating libraries, and book - clubs; which spread them through every part of the United Kingdom.

You have, also, what, I believe, few writers of romances can boast, a co-operator either for good or evil in the STAGE. It does not come within my purpose to make any remarks on the degradation the stage has of late years undergone: or to lament, that where the vices of mankind, or the follies of the passing hour, were formerly held up to detestation, or to ridicule; a little splendid scenerv. and a few newly-arranged national airs, are all that gain applause; or that they possess stronger attractions than lofty sentiments and heroic actions. merely allude to the subject as increasing your responsibility as an author, whilst it extends your popularity; and as a

proof of the indispensable necessity for your works having a decidedly MORAL tendency. Their high claim to dramatic effect is proved by the little alteration they require: but if they are defective in what must be considered the principal point, sound morality, they become more extensively and decidedly pernicious, as, in the curtailment requisite for the stage, the few attempts to draw a plausible moral that may be scattered through the novel, must be omitted in the melodrama. You possess, Sir, a most powerful influence over the imagination of your -readers, the engine by which the passions are oftenest excited, and the character exalted or deprayed. Without the pleasures of the imagination the mind of man grows cold, rigid, and morose; the scenes of real life have too often a tendency to melancholy and despondency;

it is by an occasional flight into the regions of fancy, that we return with invigorated hearts and increased hope, warmed to the enjoyment of good that is not ideal, to disinterested affection, social duties, and domestic pleasures. On the other hand, imaginary scenes of vice and depravity, by frequent repetition, cease to inspire the disgust they at first produced; and, in the end, take such hold on the passions, that their turpitude vanishes, and they are freely and practically indulged in. The daily routine of fraud and vice that real life exhibits, has a natural tendency to deterioration or misanthropy. It is by an indulgence of the beau idéal that we escape from scenes of disgust and misery, and are led to the contemplation of all that is high and holy, in those blissful regions where what is corrupt here "shall

" put on incorruption," and what is mor" tal shall put on immortality."

Do not mistake me, Sir: I am no favourer of religious novels; and I assure you I am neither a Methodist nor a Clergyman, only one of the people called Christians; but in that character, I cannot divest myself of the opinion that popular works of amusement ought to have their moral tendency clearly defined; and that the precepts they inculcate should be of that high tone which have the word of God for their foundation. Nevertheless, it is one of the most serious objections to your writings, that Holy Writ is for ever referred to; but in a manner that makes it ludicrous.

It is an acknowledged position that "no work is good, that does not tend to "make mankind better in some way or "other." And it is to this test I wish to

bring your very animated and ingenious works. Are they calculated for the improvement of your reneed hundred THOUSAND readers ? or therely for the amusement of their idle hours? Do any of them lay down the last volume of any one of your romances impressed with any great or useful moral truth? I mean not that Birmingham coin called worldly wisdom: but do they detest vice, and love -virtue? do they reverence religion, and respect sound principles, better than they did when they began the work? On the strength and clearness of these impressions, depends the intrinsic value of vour work; without them it is mere tinsel. only fit for candlelight and distance, or calculated to puzzle and deceive. Historians are bound by facts and truth, to give characters as they really existed, and motives as far as they could be

guessed: but a writer of fetitious adventures is unfettered; he may make what he pleases of the clay he works with. The strong contrast of virtue and vice. as portraired in different characters, makes the beauty of his writings. He creates scenes to display the passions, and to show the intricacies of the human heart. In this delineation you are excelled by few; your figures stand out from your canvass, and present themselves to us in all the energy of life and action: but in a moral point of view, you do not merely leave us on the threshold to form our own judgment of the interior of the dyelling, but there is a constant interest excited in favour of lawless vicious characters, and predatory habits: a gloss is given to crime, and a palliation thrown over guilt, that requires a good deal of neutralising before

it can be innoxious to the larger number of your readers. Powerfully to awaken curiosity by scenes of deep interest and pathos, and to bring some of the strongest feelings of the human heart into full play, is the material excellence in works of imagination: but if, after this excitement, the roused feelings are not directed to a great and laudable end, sympathy is wasted, and the mind is prepared for a wrong bias, or receiving an erroneous, and it may be, a detrimental impression. Hence arises that indispensable moral duty attached to authors of novels and romances, that they finally make virtue triumphant, and bring on vice its due punishment: if they write not to give an important and valuable lesson, they waste the time of their readers—they do worse; for the human "heart is deceitful above all things,"

and easily misled by the imagination; and it is not left at the end of a highly wrought up novel, where it was at the beginning. If the head governs the heart, and firm and steady principles are deeply rooted, a temporary delusion of the imagination is soon recovered. But this is not the case with careless or enthusiastic readers, nor with the young, the ignorant, or the indiscriminating, who take things literally, or pin their faith on a name encircled by popular applause; and receive a deep, lasting, and sometimes a fatal impression, from what was written with no sinister designs, but is the mere offspring of carelessness and genius. There are parents now living, who can with anguish trace the wildness and profligacy of promising youths to the perusal of Tom Jones, and the Beggar's Opera was believed to

is made; the reader can at best only pick up now and then a scrap of morality, as bees are said by their chymical skill to extract honey from poisonous plants. The interest of the story depends wholly on the predictions and agency of gipsies and smugglers. If faith in horoscopes had not been long exploded, it might have aided them; for the random conjectures of Mannering are borne out to "the very letter," and by the assistance of a profligate pauper; but at last an opportunity occurs of getting out of the labyrinth of cause and event, and giving a most impressive moral turn to the sequel. The clergyman who comes forward so seasonably to absolve Meg Merrilies might have done much; but though he exhorts her to repentance, and she "dies and makes no sign," he savs only just so much on the uncove-

nanted mercy of God, as may rather encourage a delusive confidence in imperfect repentance, than repress vice by showing its dangerous consequences, and its certain and everlasting punishment. With this defect, all the beauties of the work, and I am among the foremost in acknowledging and admiring them, contribute in no way to benefit or improve its numerous readers, though it may promote the sale of Moore's Almanack; or make the ignorant, the young, and the credulous, listen with more faith and interest to the predictions of the wandering gipsy tribes of the present day.

The Antiquary seems to be written with no view beyond showing that eccentric characters are often benevolent ones. It is impossible not to observe in this work also that the chief agent is

a pauper, who at the close of a life of idleness and petty depredation, is endowed with virtues that only grace the hoary heads of the pious and the moral. I might remark also, that the clerical character is introduced, purposely for an oblique satire on the cloth; and in the exquisite scene of the funeral of the fisherman's son, where the pastor's office would naturally call him to administer consolation (and on such occasions the Scotch Ministers have the character of the most meritorious attention to the welfare of their flocks), no one appears, nor is it very certain any one attended at all: for, when the family were sinking under their grief, the only alleviation they experienced was gratified pride, at the attendance of the Laird. Surely this is defective MORAL, if not worse; but it is not my purpose to cavil at

small faults, where there are so many beauties: and had Waverley, Guy Mannering, and the Antiquary completed the series, this address would have been spared you; but it is in later works that I have found some key to these, and have been confirmed in an opinion that you entertain no very favourable sentiments towards the clergy, nor are disposed to do them justice. I confess, Sir, when I read OLD MORTALITY, I was at a loss to guess what you simed I pass over the Black Dwarf. A moral is familiar to us in the nursery tale of la Belle et le Bête, and more clearly made out: for le pauvre béte excites our pity and love: whereas the Black Dwarf is so disgusting, it is hardly a wonder that his name is made a vehicle for sedition and blasphemy.

Balfour, the rigid Puritan, is drawn

with great skill; and it might have been imagined your design was to show the dangers of intemperate zeal and Calvinism; and knowing that this doctrine prevails in the established Church of Scotland, you might be suspected of intending some lurking satire; but I have since doubted if you had any determined purpose beyond making religion absurd, or vindictive; for you bring no character in contrast, to show that moderation which is the essence of true piety: the principal actors in each party are represented as equally cruel and relentless I fear history may be persecutors. brought on your side; but your hands were not tied by any historical facts: you were at liberty to mould events, as vou made characters, to suit any purpose, moral or religious; and you do not deal fairly by your readers when you

leave them to wander in the labyrinth of error without any clue to guide them out of it. The tedious sermons of Kettledrum and Poundtext, with the effusions of old Mause, however characteristic. are placed in a point of view that is calculated to make religious worship ridiculous, and Scripture language ludicrous: and can neither be reconciled to good taste or pious feeling. Burlesque is always misapplied to religion; it can only gratify the spleen of the sceptic, and encourage brutal mirth in the ignorant and the vulgar: the benevolent feel pity for delusion: and the right-minded are disgusted with jests on a subject which concerns the interests of immortality.

In Rob Roy something of the same oblique ridicule is levelled at the Catholics: but as I shall have occasion to remark again on this subject, I shall not

dwell on it now; as the very hinge on which this tale turns, annihilates or reverses the first duty that links the human species together, that which stands in the Decalogue next to our duty to God -honour and reverence to parents. In this romance, a careful father, whose anxiety for the welfare of his son may perhaps occasionally carry him a very little too far, is the real sufferer, whilst the offender, the disobedient son, "rides " triumphant through the storm." We have an oracle written with the finger of God, to assure us that "the sins of the "father will" sometimes "be visited on "the children to the third and fourth "generation." You, Sir, reverse this decree, and visit the disobedience of the son, on the head of the provident father.

<sup>&</sup>quot; If chance thy home

<sup>&</sup>quot; Salute thee with a father's honoured name,

"Go call thy sons, instruct them what a debt" They owe thee."

But as you value your own peace and comfort, caution them not to make such a return, or to believe, even from your pen, that they can prosper in their disobedience!

You have also made another, and great deviation from sound morality in the work, by endeavouring to represent Rob Roy what it was out of all truth and nature he could be, a mild, amiable man, and, at the same time, a desperate outlaw; "whose hand was against every "honest' man, and every man's hand "against him." You might as well fancy a tiger, gorged with blood, tame as your domestic spaniel, because he was too completely satiated to attack you. However the timid Baillie may palliate his faults, or his tartan and plumes dazzle

an audience, Rob Roy deserved a gallows; the savage revenge of his wife, worthy only of a Semiramis or a Catherine, is softened down nearly to justifiable retaliation; and no small part of the interest of the work turns in favour of a lawless desperate spoiler, whose hands were reeking with the blood of his countrymen; yet of whom we are told, " he was averse to bloodshed," unless his crimes, or his personal safety, made it Is this a lesson for youth? necessary. Is this a time to shake parental authority, and make the first and most binding of our social duties a dead letter?

It would swell these pages beyond my purpose, if I entered more minutely into this work; I must, therefore, go on to the Heart of Mid-Lothian, which I think is next in succession; and surely the subject of the tale is, in its very essence, as great an offence to moral feeling, as it is

to modesty and decorum; and unquestionably very unfit to be read aloud in any family circle. In George Robinson we have a second Tom Jones, without even the palliating generous qualities of the latter, but a cold, calculating, selfish, successful villain: and a silly, unprincipled, ignorant girl for his dupe; who, after escaping the gallows, is, by the most extraordinary metamorphose that ever entered the brain of a boardingschool novel-writer, turned into an highly accomplished woman of fashion; and in the course of two or three years spent abroad, this wonderful change is effected. You would have done a most acceptable service, Sir, to that portion of the public who take their children to the continent for education, if you had pointed out the place where the air is so pregnant with instruction: or where Cin-

derella's fairy friend is still to be found: as it cannot easily be credited that the profligate who took Effic Dean's altroad. whose boon companions were thieves, smugglers, and crazy vagrants, could be very efficient in forming the mind and embellishing the exterior of one who was to shine " the most brilliant star of the "court drawing-room." Really you must pardon me for saying, that I should not have thought this superlative nonsense worth noticing, if it were not in a great degree mischievous; if it did not hold out encouragement to every species of profligacy. Of this you seem to have been a little aware yourself; for, in the last page you try to sift out as a sort of moral, "that vice, however prosper-" ous, brings misery as its natural con-" sequence." But as you have painted at misery, it will not, I fear, be consi-

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dered as very repulsive, by that numerous, class of your readers who are not able to bring things to the test of principle, and who are anxious to mount the ladder to riches and rank at any hazard, or to obtain them by any sacrifice. "The life of adventurers, game-"sters, gipsies, beggars, and robbers, is " not unpleasant. It requires restraint "to keep men from falling into that " habit. The shifting tides of fear and "hope, the flight and pursuit, the "peril and escape, the alternate fa-" mine and feast of the savage and the "thief, after a time render all course of " slow, steady, progressive, unvaried oc-"cupation, and the prospect only of a " limited mediocrity at the end of long " labour, to the last degree tame, lan-"guid, and insipid \*." Encouraging va-

<sup>\*</sup> Burke.

grancy and lawless habits, by painting the scenes they produce with the most vivid colouring; concealing and glossing over all the vice and wretchedness that are their inseparable attendants, must therefore be to the highest degree injurious to society; destructive of honesty, integrity, virtue, and morality. It is giving stimulants in the place of nourishment, base metal gilt, as a substitute for gold.

Lady Staunton's unhappiness is the mere whim and idleness of a spurious sort of fine lady who must find some wish to be gratified; it is not repentance, it is not contration, it is mere satisfy of gratification, not the heart-rending humiliation of one who could not be very fully acquitted of child-murder, who at least never thought of the offspring of her crime, till she was

ed some fresh excitement. The integrity of Jenny Deans affords you a little shelter; but there is not the same attraction in her recompense, that the brilliant career of her sister affords; and an important part of your readers will be apt to prefer stepping from the life of a cowkeeper's daughter to a conspicuous box at the opera, to becoming the wife of a poor minister at the manse.

Of your again introducing Calvinism in the character of the rigid Cameronian, I shall only observe now, that when you contrast the pharisaical, self-applauding cowkeeper, and a regular humble minister, you throw the whole weight into the scale of pretension, and make piety and humility kick the beam, or fade to a shadow, when opposed to spiritual pride, and stern unrelenting

visionary enthusiasm. Perhaps the implied satire in this may be better understood by those minutely acquainted with the religious sects of Scotland; but when I couple it with the portrait you draw of an English parish priest, which is, allow me to say, as much out of reality as possible, I can perceive no purpose except making the clerical profession, and religion, equally contemptible; but I trust there are as few clergy on this side the border, who are made miserable by such sons, as there are parsonages, like Mr. Staunton's, the seats of pleasure, or the shelter of vice.

In the Bride of Lammermuir you seem inclined to make some attempt at the quende honorable; your readers have at least the satisfaction of feeling themselves oftener in good company; and you give a useful lesson to parents on the dan-

ger of trifling with the affections of their children to answer their own ambitious schemes. All this is well, and would have been better, if the lesson had not been degraded by the machinery of exploded superstition and ignorant credulity, in a way that makes the decrees of Providence appear to be in subjection to the predictions of low-bred knavery. But in this work there is less to censure, than to regret that you do not turn such materials to a better account.

Your character of statesmen in general is any thing but liberal. Every man is free to indulge his own opinion; how far he is free also to publish it, is a question I shall not take upon me to determine; though I could not fail being struck with the coincidence, that whilst additional laws and regulations were necessary to stop seditious publications of

the most dangerous and inflammatory nature, and at the moment these laws were carrying into execution, a writer of vour fame and high estimation should sanction, if not give encouragement to assassination, by making Bucklaw, when speaking of Ministers, say, " One or two " of those scoundrel statesmen should be " shot once a year, just to keep the others "on their good behaviour!!!" name of Heaven, Sir, were you aware of what you wrote? or the time and season in which you threw out such a hint? Had your work been published seven years ago. I should not envy your feeling when the names of Perceval or Bel-LINGHAM sounded in your ears! These hints from such authority do not fall to the ground; too many of the evil-minded or deluded, are ready to profit by them:

Whilst these pages are preparing for

the press, a practical illustration of this dangerous doctrine is filling Europe with horror and consternation, and making every member of a royal family tremble. Lowering in the public estimation, the general character of those who fill high and important stations, must be detrimental to the welfare of society, and the cause of religion and morality. The laws of God, and the legislature of a country, can only be executed by the hands of men, who partake of the imperfections of humanity; yet no person of common sense can believe that power is safer in the hands of the ignorant, the needy, and the unprincipled, than in those of the educated, the affluent, and more probably the high-minded and the conscientious: therefore, whether you aim a shaft at the Church, in the character of Bide-the-bent, or at the State

through that of Lord Turntippet, you are at this moment putting additional firebrands into the hands of madmen.

The ink was not dry on this page, nor the pen laid down, ere a conspiracy of the most diabplical nature for murdering the Cabinet Ministers, en masse, was discovered. Can it be a matter of wonder that the unprincipled and the needy are able to goad on the ignorant and the vicious, to deeds of violence and blood, when such loose and encouraging hints are. thrown out by the carelessness of an author of popular celebrity and boundless fame? In the early part of the French revolution, when its promoters wished to induce the nation to tolerate the plunder of the clergy, the massacre of St. Bartholomew (the everlasting disgrace of the French) was got up at one of the theatres: and the Cardinal of Lorraine was represented in his sacerdotal habit, ordering the execution of the Protestants. This scene was not acted in vain!!

The Legend of Montrose partakes less than any of the series in question. of that defective or perverted morality of which I complain, and therefore I shall not dwell on it: it seemed to be either preparing the way for some atonement: or else, that it was to close this species of your literary labours. But your adieu now appears only to have been intended as a ruse d'amour, to try our feelings; as, at the time you wrote it, you had other works in progress; and if you disappeared on Scottish ground, it was only to come out, with fresh eclat, on English. You seem to be perfectly aware that you had new difficulties to encounter when vou crossed the border, though I hardly think you comprehended all that would await you, when you called our national feelings into play. It is plain, that you are as yet not arrived farther south than Cumberland, and know of us no more than you have seen from Skiddaw. You must pardon me for feeling sure that "Chatham's language is (not) "your mother tongue;" and therefore we may be naturally inclined to bring you pretty closely to the test of faithful representation of national character. To the perusal of your preceding works, few of your readers could bring any local knowledge; you were read by the great and the vulgar, with nearly the same feelings as they would have brought to a narrative of a residence in Albania, or a journey through the Illinois. The remains of the feudal system that existed even as late as sixty years ago in Scotland, the clanship, the warfare, and the jealousy that are attendant on it, come no more in contact with true English feeling than the habits of the wandering

"In England the civilization Arabs. " has been so long complete," that we do not go back with any delight to the age of ignorance and barbarism: nor will our records bear decorating with all the brilliant scenery with which you can embellish the wild adventures of the Highlands. As our country is less picturesque and rot mantic, so have always been our habits. and so broad and bright a stream of light is thrown across our history by the Reformation, that we look back to any antecedent period with something like shame and regret for the errors and tyranny that may have marked any particular period, and rejoice that they are thrown into deep and remote shade. The time, therefore, which you have chosen for the scene of Ivanhoz is not fortunate; for it presents nothing very interesting to English hearts: however,

that is a fault we might have forgiven. if you had attended to our prejudices in other respects. We do not, I am afraid. ever draw the moral lessons we ought from the great volume of history that is unrolled for our instruction, and which funishes the materials for future wisdom. by the picture it paints of the errors and vices of mankind. You have the power, Sir. of bringing the lessons it contains home to our bosoms, by spreading with your animated pencil the customs and manners of distant periods, on the canvass before us; but if you do not this fairly, you are "polluting the well of "history with modern inventions, and "impressing upon the rising generation "false ideas of the age which you de-" scribe;" and I am compelled to acknowledge that I think you sometimes do injustice to human nature as well as national character. You draw the Grand Master a monster of pride, bigotry, and unrelenting severity; and the Templar, the Prior, and Friar Tuck, all equally licentious, luxurious, and vicious. Is that just, as a general character, even of the professors of a mistaken and pompous religion? Was it merely because they were dissolute, that Philip the Fourth and Clement the Fifth combined to abolish the Templars? or because the Meaks were all idle and luxurious, that our tyrannic Henry destroyed the monasteries? When suffering under all that malice could inflict, the worst enemies of the order of Templars were forced to acknowledge the noble courage of John de Molay, and the exemplary piety of numbers of high-minded gentlemen who were sent either to beg their bread throughout Europe, or seal their fidelity

to their religion and their vow, on the rack and at the stake. If no estates had belonged to our monastic orders, Henry VIII. would have left them in peace. And though, on their dissolution, some might be found in every establishment; indolent and depraved; yet, from what we know of their diligence in preserving the little learning of that age, we have reason to believe that the larger mumber (for the vicious are always conspicuous, and the virtuous retired) were eminent for their learning, their piety, and the austerity of their lives. Why, therefore, as you were not fettered by facts, should you be unjust to a body of men, by impressing on the minds of those who cannot search for truth, an idea that there was vice or avarice under every cowl or every mantle?

When Clarendon drew the character

of the leading men of his day, his faithful pen was just to those who differed from him in political opinion, as to those who agreed with him. Why, Sir, in painting fictitious characters, should you give all the vices to the higher classes. and all the virtues to the lower orders? You give us warm-hearted GIPSIES; disinterested BEGGARS; and noble, just, and patriotic outlaws; whilst persons of the higher orders are invariably timeserving, ambitious, unprincipled, and revengeful. But whilst this was confined to the Scorch character, as not one in a thousand of your readers could judge of its truth, we left it to our northern neighbours to call you to account if you had libelled them; but we are not disposed that you shall do so by us, without some remonstrance on our part. Our gallant sons do not feel much

obliged to you for calling the "people " of England a fierce race, quarrelling "ever with their neighbours, and ready " to plunge the sword into the bowels of "each other;" or representing the Ministers of her Church, in every age, and under all circumstances, as weak and ignorant, or indolent and vicious. Viewing Ivanhor as a single work, I might not have so readily entered into a defence of Priors and Templars; but taking it as one of a voluminous series, I must consider it as a bold step in a path you had hitherto trodden with caution. Through the twenty-seven volumes already on our shelves, there: runs the same contempt for the clericalorder, with whatever church they may be connected, except one solitary instance \*.

<sup>\*</sup> Mr. Morton in Waverley.

The most celebrated painters are too apt to introduce a favourite head into every piece. We forgive the fault when the beauty or solemnity of the subject makes amends for the repetition. Although you, Sir, have your eye constantly on a sister art, and seem well acquainted with its rules; you are apt to, forget one of the rudiments laid down to. students, "not to copy from themselves." You should have done more justice to your own fertile invention than throwing, MEG MERRILIES, MADGE WILDFIRE, and HELEN MAC GREGOR, into a cauldron, to "mingle, mingle, mingle;" and from the pestilential exhalation, produce such. a fiend as Ulrica. And if in those scenes of disgust and horror her confession, and the deathbed of France Boy, exhibited, the reader could smile, it would have been at the absurdity of such a demoniac masquerading in the dress of one of the Furies, where there was little chance of the labours of her toilette producing much effect. It certainly destroys the possibility of her conduct being the unpremeditated act of maddened revenge, as this same habit could only have been procured from a warehouse in the Haymarket, and sent by the York mail for the occasion.

Nor can I felicitate you on having "conjured the name of Robin Hood "with the same success as that of Rob "Roy." Whether the Kendal green does not touch our phlegmatic hearts, as the tartan does our northern neighbours; or whether, having been living witnesses of the juggler tricks of the Emperor of marauders and charlatans, and seen his feats written with our dearest blood, has weakened our taste for less illustrious

rogues, I know not; but certain it is, that the notable prisoner at St. Helena has exploded even from our nurseries, Robin Hood, and Guy Earl of Warwick.

You may recall these worthies, and present them in brilliant and fictitious colours to our imagination; but if you expect us to follow you, and grope in the dust of antiquity, you must hold forth the certainty, not only that we shall be able to read the inscriptions we may find there, but that they will record facts, and be worth the trouble our search may cost us; that they will enlighten us, not puzzle and confound our previously received opinions, or lessen great characters by such misrepresentation as Richard Cœur de Lion getting drunk with a counterfeit priest and highwayman. But though a want of truth and fidelity in representing national character, is a just subject of complaint in historical novels, it is by no means the most. offensive quality in the composition of IVANHOE. A violation of our religious as well as our moral feelings strongly marks its pages. As a nation "we know, "and, what is better, we feel inwardly. "that religion is the basis of civil so-"ciety, and the source of all good and " of all comfort." That amidst this general feeling, Infidelity will sometimes raise its venomous head, is too true; yet do not, Sir, let the Political Registers that, in search of kindred spirits, may find their way into the North, deceive vou. "Because half a dozen grasshop-" pers under a fern, make the field ring "with their importunate chink, whilst "thousands of great cattle, reposing be-"neath the shadow of the British oak, "chew the cud, and are silent, pray do

"not imagine that those who make the "noise are the only inhabitants of the " field; that, of course, they are many in "number; or that, after all, they are " other than the little, shrivelled, meagre, "hopping, though troublesome, insects " of the hour." 'To continue the metaphor of the eloquent Burke, though they may be armed with poisonous stings, we know how to keep them from hurting us, provided they are not smuggled into "our chambers and our ovens," wrapt up in some unsuspected articles. Be assured, that, with a very few exceptions, the followers of an infidel staymaker are "unwashed artificers," who are pushed on to crime and blood, by crafty and needy knaves, who having neither characters nor property to lose, hope to gain something from general plunder. not consider these miscreants, or their

followers, as the representatives of the English Nation. Come a little farther into the country, and you will find that we reverence and we love our BIBLE: the first lessons we teach our children are its holy precepts, and the last consolations that quiver on our dying lips are the hopes and promises it contains. We read it in our families, we distribute it amonest our dependents; we subscribe for its dispersion, and send the glorious day-star of revelation to the farthest extremity of the earth. Can we then tolerate your making it a spermook? Can we bear to have the solemn truths of Holy Writ. or the sublime language of Inspiration, turned into ridicule by your licentious Templars and friars? Even if it were characteristic; it would be disgusting. But you must allow me to doubt, Sir, whether the Prior, the

Templar, or even the Grand Master himself, could have had sacred texts so much at their finger's ends: but in the Saxon churls it is out of all keeping. You allow, that even Cedric could not read, much less could his swineherd or his iester: and if they could have read their Bible, as they were Catholics, it was as completely closed to them as the oracles of Delphos. Gurth and Wamba might with as much propriety have quoted Homer or Xenophon; yet, absurd as this is, there is scarcely a single page, in which those who reverence their Bible do not shudder to find the words of the LORD of HEAVEN and EARTH, the promises of life and immortality, applied to the purposes of fraud and profligacy.

The inverted morality of representing outlaws and cut-throats as the country gentlemen and justices of the peace of that day, may, at this enlightened period, fall harmless to the ground; but the evil resulting from a contemptuous use of Scripture is DEEP and DEADLY!

I will not believe, though a "thou-" sand tongues proclaim the tale," that your Sir, could mean to prostitute vonr brilliant and elastic pen to aid the disciples of Blasphemy. Treason, and Re-BELLION, who would annihilate every hope of the soul, and plunge a dagger in every honest breast. But is it not your indispensable duty, as an author, to take care von do not throw down your pen so negligently, that it can be seized, and put into a scale, where it is no " feather "weight," but where it will tell, more than thousands of two penny tracts, of Black and Yellow Dwarfs, or Political Registers.

Are you a father? Have you pre-

mising sons or blooming daughters? Will not love for them check you from corrupting their hearts in their very cradles, and by a father's pen? If you have no such blessings, feel for those who have; lend not your powerful aid to the scapticism and immorality that is now inundating our poetry, mingling with our science, and trying to get through every crevice; and spread contagion over the land. Let us in your works, at least, have an opportunity of laying our onution aside, and trusting them safely in the hands of our children.

I do not suspect you of intending harm; but careless table-talk sometimes infuses poison, even though it dreps laughing from the lips. It is more natural perhaps than fair, to judge of the habits of an author from his style of writing. That such light works as Wa-

VERLEY and IVANHOR can form the occupation of your serious hours. I can no more believe, than that a man in sound health, and of a robust constitution, would injure the one, or destroy the other, by dining always on pastry and confectionary with a substantial and plentiful table before him. Your works "do not " smell of the lamp;" evidently they are the playful recreation of a mind either devoted to severer studies, or to avocations that put a painful restraint on the imagination. I conjecture that when you have dined, drank your bottle of claret, taken your coffee, and a few pinches of genuine Irish blackguard, if pen and paper are placed before you, you can produce thirty or forty pages of a romance with as much ease as you could converse. If they are to be forrarded to your printer before the ink is

dry, and you find a worked-off sheet on your breakfast-table, it is much to be lamented, as a little consideration would probably greatly enhance their value. No character is more dangerous in society than a man of genius and captivating manners, without sound moral principles. But an author of this description is far more extensively mischievous. The temporary example of the first may injure a few individuals; he may poison a well, but the latter poisons a river, and diffuses contagion by innumerable rills through whole kingdoms; the current of time rolls on to successive generations, and there is no guessing when the venom will be spent, or how many yet unborn may be contaminated by its influence.

If you think, Sir, that you have worked your Scotish mine sufficiently for the present, and are afraid, lest, by

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